

The Arboretum Bulletin



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BUY A BOX OF APPLES AND HELP THE ARBORETUM

The members of the Arboretum Foundation are well aware of the importance to the State of the apple industry, and its difficulties owing to the stoppage of export this year. Since the Arboretum is an institution of state-wide significance dependent for its growth on the economic welfare of the State, it seems appropriate that one of our undertakings should be in the direction of helping publicize Washington apples. We have therefore arranged for a very attractive special twelve-pound carton of one dozen "Delicious" apples which will bear the Arboretum Foundation name and which can be delivered for \$1.50, express included, anywhere in the United States.

Business houses and executives in many Seattle firms have already given us orders for these to be shipped to their friends and clients throughout the country, and we hope that every member of the Foundation will want to order several boxes and to help us sell as many as possible. The Foundation will benefit by this not only financially, but as well by the publicity it accords the Arboretum.

The office of the Arboretum Foundation at 4420 White Building, will take orders every week-day morning from 8 until 12 o'clock. There will be a sample carton of the apples there for you to see if you wish to. Send them to your children who are away at college, send them to friends who are convalescing, send them in gratitude for favors past, and in anticipation for favors to come, send them for Thanksgiving and for Christmas.—you may be sure they will be happily received.

GARDEN NOTES

By PERRY B. TRUAX

WHEN Dr. Hanley asked me to write a few lines for the *Arboretum Bulletin*, I remonstrated on the ground that my floricultural practices are often far from conventional and certainly not sufficiently expert to find a place in this worthy publication. I told him it is only a short time since I sought to rid my garden of moles by incorporating great quantities of broken glass in every choice planting; also that I had conceived the bright idea—both of these not so many years ago—of eliminating

chickweed with a plumber's blow torch. The results were not at all to my credit.

Many of my experiments have been duds, but here is one that turned out well, or at least it has so far. My wife and I had the good fortune to entertain at our home Mrs. Gwendolyn Anley, truly one of the top amateur gardeners of Great Britain. And, by the way, those of you who are interested in alpines should buy her book published in America by Scribner's, "Alpine House Culture for Amateurs". It is very much worth while. There are very few alpine houses in this part of the country, but a cold frame will serve just as well.

Just by chance Mrs. Anley remarked that the leaves of *Arbutus Menziesii*—her designation and the correct one for our madrona—must be highly acid. At once I started to save all pine needles and madrona leaves. After being thoroughly dried in the sun, they were ground to powder through a hammer-mill, driven by an old Ford motor. The resulting material was allowed to decay for one year. A sample sent to Washington State College at Pullman was analyzed with astonishing results. Acidity registered 5.0, which is very good. It is high in phosphates and potash is also very good—lacking only in nitrogen. With nothing added, it now promises to grow *trailing arbutus*. Any of you who have struggled with *trailing arbutus* will know that that is big news. Now it is my guess that *trailing arbutus* has played the leading role in more local garden tragedies than any one single plant. Anyway, plants that I placed in this mixture, not knowing it was lacking in nitrogen, are thriving. It will be another interesting experiment to see what it will do for *trailing arbutus* with the addition of dry blood, which is high in nitrogen, and which I am supplying at the suggestion of Mr. D. J. O'Donnell, Washington State Nursery Inspector.

This mixture should produce sensational results in the culture of heathers, rhododendrons, azaleas, camelias, dogwood, and other acid-loving species, including the not-so-well-known *Hepatica triloba*—that of the round leaf, which the late J. D. Ross, a keen gardener, grew to such a high degree of perfection. Incidentally, I rate it as a spring flower of very top desirability. If you try it, remember this—the round-leaved variety (*H. triloba*) likes acid soil, while the pointed leaf form (*H. acutiloba*) requires alkaline soil.

If this soil works as well as it now promises, it will not only produce some wonderful effects in the culture of acid-loving plants, but it will mean turning to useful account the despised madrona leaves which are now worthless and a good deal of a pest in any garden. The secret of the whole thing, of course, is to grind the leaves to powder, for they simply will not decay with other leaves in a compost pile.

I have been asked to touch on the culture of the blue poppy from Tibet, botanically known as *Meconopsis betonicifolia*, variety *Baileyi*, and often referred to as just *Meconopsis Baileyi*. I struggled for years to get a start with this treasure before I learned that the item of first importance is to have fresh seed and to sow it in the late summer or early fall as soon as it has ripened. It loses fertility with unbelievable rapidity if carried over until spring.

The seed should be sown in a cold frame—no heat required—in soil consisting of equal parts of leaf mold, peat moss and sand. This mixture should be at least three inches deep, and the seed should be sown not too thickly over the surface and just gently pressed into the soil. The frame should be kept moist and shaded against bright sun until the seed has germinated and made a little growth. Fresh seed will germinate in about three weeks. A glass sash should be available with which to cover the plants against weather extremes throughout the winter, that is, excessive rains and extreme cold. Even during the winter the bed should not be allowed to dry out, but the glass should be removed entirely during mild weather. Air should be admitted always during fine weather, but in the event of freezing, the frame should be closed tight until milder weather returns.

The foliage disappears in the early winter but growth starts along in March. When the plants have grown to a height of say two inches, they should be removed to their permanent quarters, where they should be kept moist and shaded for a few days until they become established. Any good, fairly rich garden loam suits it. Either very well decayed cow manure or leaf mold may be used to supply nourishment, and if you wish really good results, the beds should be prepared to a depth of twenty inches—really twenty inches, no fudging! The area should be kept moist, but as is almost invariably the case, drainage should be perfect.

It has been my experience that location is important. These plants will not tolerate exposure to hot afternoon sun. They like the shade of trees if it can be supplied without interference from the roots of the trees. For me they thrive on the east side of a five-foot brick wall, whereas they die out entirely when placed on the west side of the same wall.

A planting among rhododendrons offers some advantages for the plants seem to like the acidity present in a good planting of rhododendrons, and the rhododendron foliage conceals the not very attractive appearance of the poppy plants after they have bloomed and are ripening their seeds.

Next year I am going to watch with a great deal of interest a number of these poppies planted on Mr. J. A. Swallow's farm near Redmond. As an experiment these plants were placed near a flowing stream. The ground level is several feet above the stream, but there is a suggestion of dampness in the soil. This year the plants made beautiful blooms and are now making large crowns which promise unusual results for next year.

I am sure the Arboretum is going to do much to awaken a greater interest in gardening in Seattle, but if I could get enough

people to listen to me I should like to shout every day—for heaven's sake, throw the mongrel specimens out of your gardens and go in for the very best! Space is limited with almost all of us. A mediocre plant takes up just as much room, requires just as much watering, cultivating, fertilizing, etc., as the very best member of its family.

Take, for instance, *montbretia*. Half of the gardens in this city have large patches of this plain, small flowered, orange colored variety, which I imagine was the original type. The variety *Majesty* is readily obtainable and it has been my experience that it is entirely hardy. I declare that anyone who has seen its huge, gorgeously colored sprays will not be content to harbor the ordinary variety. Another very lovely variety is *Lady Wilson*, immense florets of rich, clear, warm yellow, blooming considerably later in the season than *Majesty*.

The same is true of gladioli—why waste time on the miserable varieties one so often sees, when such lovely things as *Picardy*, *Coryphæe*, *Commander Kochi*, *Mammoth White*, and *Pfitzer's Triumph*, to mention a few of my favorites, are so cheaply available?

One seldom sees the little treasure *Delphinium Blue Butterfly*—real blue—20 inches tall and branchy—a hardy perennial and a gem.

There is another one very few grow—*Dianthus Sweet Wivelsfield*. It is one of the showiest subjects I know and is as easy as radishes. It is a perennial—20 to 24 inches tall, all shades of pink and red. Get the improved form from Allwood Bros., Hayward's Heath, Sussex, England. Allwood's created this by crossing, I believe, *Sweet William* and a garden pink.

If you go in for lilacs, get good ones, and grow them right—good rich well drained soil 20 inches deep—24 inches is better—and give them lime, real lime in the form of powdered limerock, a dressing every year.

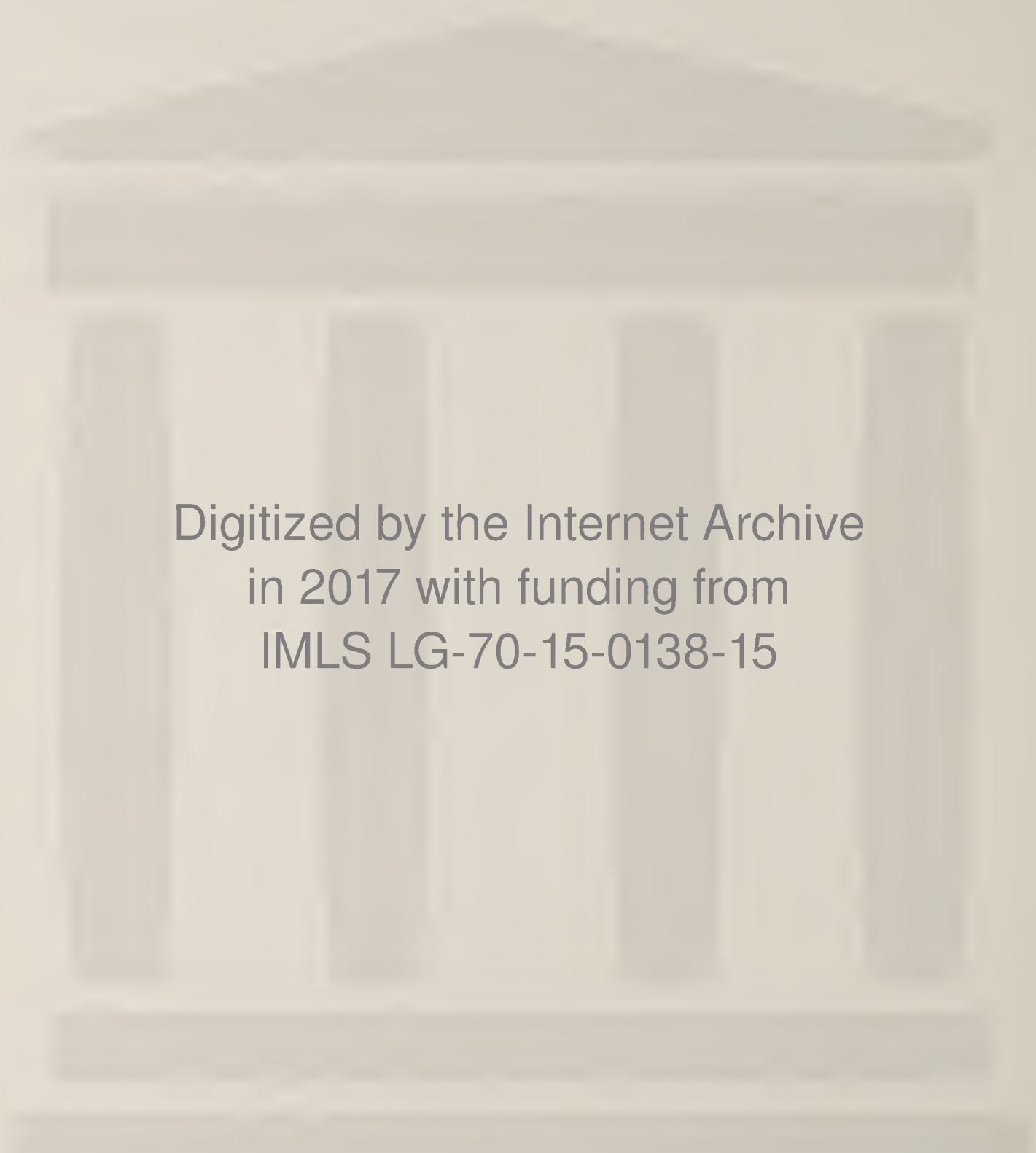
The same is true of peonies. But start with the best varieties; they, too, want rich soil—preferably three feet deep, but do not allow the roots to touch manure at the time they are planted. Also, never allow more than 1½ inches of soil to cover the crowns of the plants.

Why in the world so few people grow hellebores is more than I know. They are easy, bloom out of doors right through the winter, like lime, shade and gentle moisture with perfect drainage. The huge white form is very attractive, but the one that seems to cause more excitement than any other is the Corsican variety, *Helleborus corsicus*, a clear chartreuse green that stops traffic wherever it is shown.

If primroses fail for you, mix a pint of Nursery Volck in three gallons of water and put a cup of this mixture around the roots of each plant as you place them in their blooming quarters.

I have been asked to say something about the culture of gentians. Here, again, it is ridiculously easy if only one will take pains to give the plants what they want. Surely you have heard of gentian blue—every woman knows what it is. Also, we all know that clear, true blues are scarce in our world of flowers. There are many varieties of gentian, among the best of which is *Gentiana sino-ornata*, a soft, light, true blue, producing its profusion of blooms in the fall. It loves acid soil and must have no contact whatever with lime. It is harmful even to irrigate it with water in which there is a trace of lime.

Another equally charming gentian is *G. acaulis*, and this is the one that seems to cause so much trouble. It grows luxuriantly in



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most any garden but few are able to make it bloom. An article in an English gardening magazine—and I shall never forget my debt to Mr. O. B. Thorgrimson for telling me of "*Gardening Illustrated*", published in London—dealt at length with the culture of the much more difficult *G. verna*, and what a honey *that* is! Well, anyway, I tried this very complicated *verna* formula for *acaulis*, and lo and behold! my apparently sterile plants commenced to bloom! Since then I have gradually modified the formula until now I am always confident of good results in soil prepared to a depth of one foot, consisting of well decayed cow manure with enough gritty sand and fine gravel to provide splendid drainage. A few years ago I happened to visit a very capable gardener who was about to throw away huge mats of these plants. I told him of my experience, but he was sure his plants were sterile. He kept a few to try out the new mixture and gave me the balance. A chance was all they needed. A few months in soil to their liking, and away they went!

To my notion the best of all the gentians is *G. verna*. It is smaller than the others, but what a blue!

Any flower lover planning a trip to Europe would be well repaid to fix his itinerary to see *Gentiana verna* in its native Swiss mountains. There are no words to describe it. I have not accomplished much with it yet, but information gathered this year gives me hope for another try and if I succeed I shall be the happiest gardener in the Northwest.

SEED COLLECTING IN WESTERN MOUNTAINS

By SYLVIA EDMONDS
(Continued from Last Month)

[Note: Through the kindness of Mr. Reginald H. Parsons a seed and plant fund was made available to the Arboretum for the purpose of collecting such materials in the Western mountains this summer. Miss Sylvia Edmonds, a botany major at the University of Washington, was chosen to accompany Dr. C. L. Hitchcock on the annual botanical tour to do the collecting work. The highlights of the trip are set forth below.]

ON the afternoon of June 17, 1939, we left Seattle to begin an adventure in vagabonding that was to take us through nine weeks of thrilling and beauty-packed days and nights in a land whose loveliness and majesty never grows old. We charted our course roughly south through Oregon and California as far as San Francisco, then east via Yosemite into central Nevada. There we turned northward to follow those breath-taking ranges of the Rockies into and through Idaho before turning westward and homeward on August 19.

Our first organized camp was south of Cherryville, Oregon, in the Mt. Hood National Forest. Billows of fog hid the mountain and the rain soaked us, but ardent botanists disregard such things, and our work started. The vegetation was lush and dripping, giving an almost tropical appearance to the forest. The representative plant types were much the same as are found in the Olympics. *Rhododendron californicum* was at its best, with the plants scattered among young Douglas fir and chinquapin oak (*Castanopsis*). Some of the rhododendrons appeared diseased with what seemed to be a mosaic, which took the chlorophyll from the leaves to produce the white-blotched effects characteristic of the malady. These plants did not bloom. Of the low plants along the path the most colorful was the

pipissewaw (*Chimaphila umbellata*) and the star flower or indian potato (*Trientalis latifolia*), the tuber of which was used by the Indians in the preparation of a starch pudding. The forest floor on the lower ground near the streams was covered in places by *Vancouveria hexandra* in bloom, and in association with this was *Carex mertensiana* in flower, with its dainty, greenish-yellow heads heavy and drooping with rain. Close by was a bed of wild ginger (*Asarum caudatum*) with its tailed bloom chocolate colored. The most striking plant was *Cornus canadensis* which from a distance made banks seem snow-covered. This diminutive shrub has great ornamental value for those who can grow it well in their gardens. Some of the most beautiful plants were comparatively scarce. Only infrequently did we encounter such things as *Viola sargentosa*, or the symmetrical bushes of Oregon box (*Pachistima myrsinites*), or the sweet scented white tway-blade orchid (*Listera caulina*). The ferns ranged from the tiny *Dryopteris linneana* to the five-foot lady fern, *Athyrium filix-femina*. Seed collecting was not particularly good as it was somewhat early in the season for the plants at this elevation; herbarium material was plentiful, however.

We broke camp on the morning of the third day, with the sun shining on the mountain and in the forest for the first time. Later we stopped west of Paupin, Oregon, in a swampy mountain meadow surrounded by ponderosa pine forest. Such a wealth of flowers in this swamp! Through a colorful garden of fragrant white Sierra rein orchis (*Habenaria leucostachys*), stately white saxifrage (*S. integrifolia*), large golden senecio (*S. pseud aureus*), bright pink spikes of *Sidalcea malviflora*, and *Mimulus* primuloides, danced gay blue swallow-tail butterflies.

Soon after leaving this valley the pine forest gave way to a juniper woodland which gradually thinned out as we approached rolling sagebrush hills. From our camp near Madras, Oregon, for as far as we could see, were these barren rolling hills relieved only occasionally by stray, gnarled junipers.

Following the eastern slope of the Cascades southward, we re-entered the ponderosa pine belt, this time in the Deschutes National Forest. Here grows one of the largest stands of yellow pine in the United States.

A tiny, bright magenta *mimulus* (*M. nanus*) was found growing in the dry, hot sand which seemed too barren to support any life except deep-rooted tree species. At a higher elevation the yellow pine forest was more moist and *Paonia brownii*, *Lithospermum laetale* and *Aquilegia formosa* were abundant and in seed. The north mountain of the Three Sisters taxed our stamina and our climbing ability, but how well repaid we were! The flowers were at the height of their bloom! Among the sparse conifers (hemlocks, firs and pines) was a riotous mountain garden of *Anemone*, *Vaccinium*, *Phyllocece*, *Pulsatilla* (the tow-headed babies, so-called from their fluffy, blonde heads) and *Cornus canadensis* in beautiful, showy banks. The beauty of it was enthralling and we hated to begin the descent.

From the camp near Sisters, Oregon, we took the truck over the bumpy, dusty road to Suttle Lake where grow the largest plants of *Lilium washingtonianum* that any of us had ever seen. The gorgeous pink and white flowers were four to five inches across, with as many as ten blooms crowning a three-foot stalk. In various parts of the woods we found scarlet *Gilia*, orange *Lonicera*, a lovely wild rose (*R. hymnocarpa*), beautiful *Clarkias* and *Valerians* and in the shallows of a lake *Ranunculus aquatilis* bloomed luxuriantly.

(Continued in December Bulletin)

